



July 29, 2020

Honorable Marvin Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Bill: FY 2021 Budget Proposal – Article 5 – Beach, Clean Water, and Green Bond and Amendments**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of our 20,000 members here in Rhode Island, Clean Water Action **reiterates support for the passage of Budget Article 5, the *Beach, Clean Water, and Green Bond*, as initially proposed, and supports the amendment** to increase by \$5 million the allocation for state beaches, parks, and campgrounds to fund infrastructure improvements on the I-195 property and at other state recreation facilities.

This bond will provide much-needed funding to the state and municipalities in five critical areas: (1) state parks, beaches, and campgrounds; (2) local recreation projects; (3) working natural lands; (4) clean surface and drinking waters; and (5) municipal resiliency.

As the climate crisis worsens, municipalities will be on the front lines of the fight to protect neighborhoods and residents from the physical, environmental, and public health problems that will follow. Over the next few decades, we will see sea levels rise, coastal flooding and erosion worsen, more heat emergency days (especially in our urban communities), and stronger, more frequent, and more intense rain events. While the state must pursue effective mitigation strategies to stave off the worst-case climate scenarios, we must also be planning projects and programs that allow communities to adapt to new climate realities. These projects include, but not limited to: repairing and upgrading aging storm, sewer, and water treatment infrastructure; restoring historical floodplains and wetlands; installing green infrastructure; increasing urban tree canopy cover, and preventing coastal erosion. Without the resources that this bond will provide, our towns and cities—and thus taxpayers—will be on the hook for the entire cost of these critical and unavoidable projects.

Additionally, the state and municipalities must be mindful of the finite acreage of undeveloped property within their boundaries. Ensuring that beaches, parks, woodlands, working farms, and open space remain protected and available for residents to utilize is critical to the economic and environmental health of our state.

Besides making our communities more resilient, these projects will also spur economic growth in our state—growth that is desperately needed because of the economic contraction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The green and blue economies are ripe for growth, and with support from elected officials like this bond

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measure, we can provide new opportunities for workers in these sectors to not only help protect their families and neighbors from serious climate risks, but also provide for their families at the same time. The General Assembly has a long record of leadership when it comes to supporting clean water and open space bond measures, support that is mirrored by Rhode Island voters who overwhelmingly vote to approve these bonds each election year. Clean Water Action thanks this committee and the House of Representatives for their commitment to the stewardship of our natural resources and we urge the passage of this budget article in the full requested amount.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JDB', followed by a long horizontal stroke and a circular flourish at the end.

Johnathan Berard  
Rhode Island State Director,  
Clean Water Action